



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 109<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, MAY 24, 2005

## *House of Representatives*

# PREPARE TOMORROW'S PARENTS!

**HON. BOB FILNER**

OF CALIFORNIA  
IN THE HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the fourth national Prepare Tomorrow's Parents Month, the month between Mother's Day and Father's Day. This month is a time for teachers, parents and youth group leaders nationwide to promote parenting education and relationship skills classes for all young people.

Prepare Tomorrow's Parents Month is being sponsored by a national nonprofit organization formed in 1995 called Prepare Tomorrow's Parents. Suzy Garfinkle Chevrier, founder and president of Prepare Tomorrow's Parents, says, "Parenting is not a hobby. It is the most important work most of us will ever do. Let's not leave our grandchildren's future to chance."

Is it not strange, Mr. Speaker, that one of the most important and difficult skills, raising children, goes untaught? Learning parenting skills is vital because the early experiences of children's lives impact their potential for learning

and for mental health. We need to create better parents because neglected or abused children are especially prone to perpetuate this cycle when they become adults without resources for healthy parenting.

An alarming number of children are at risk of being abused, neglected or otherwise poorly nurtured by inadequately prepared or nonsupportive parents. Inadequate parenting can contribute to teen pregnancy, depression, addictions, academic failure, delinquency and, later, criminal behavior.

I imagine that the vast majority of adults in the United States believe that parenting and relationship skills should be taught. Yet few students now receive this instruction. School-based parenting education programs can help to prevent future child abuse and work to build healthy children by developing an understanding of child development in future parents and by providing parenting skills such as empathy, listening, problem solving and critical thinking.

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Regardless of how much detail the young people remember from their classes by the time they become parents, the instruction gives them a deep sense of the reality of parenting, of the sacrifices and demands as well as the joys. Prepare Tomorrow's Parents is a group working towards a society in which every child is well-nurtured and parenting is valued and undertaken by prepared adults.

Parenting education for students is being taught successfully in many schools around the Nation, primarily through family and consumer science classes, but not enough young people, especially boys, participate in these elective courses. Expanding and requiring these classes will save many more current and future families

much heartache. It will help us to help our young people succeed at being parents that will make them, their children and their parents happy, productive and proud.

Finally, establishing parent education classes honors the work of mothers and fathers by teaching our young people what a complex effort it takes to raise a child. As well as learning new skills, they will begin to appreciate more and more the care they have received from their parents.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Prepare Tomorrow's Parents for sponsoring Prepare Tomorrow's Parents Month.